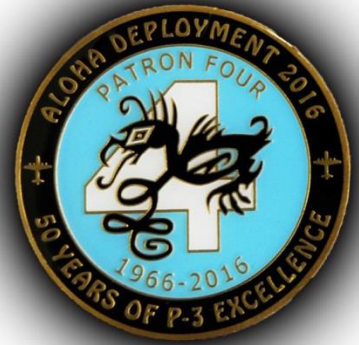




# PATROL SQUADRON FOUR SKINNY DRAGONS DEPLOYMENT NEWSLETTER 2016



CDR CHRIS SMITH

COMMANDING OFFICER



CMDCM CARROL-GILLIS

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF



CDR BRYAN HAGER

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

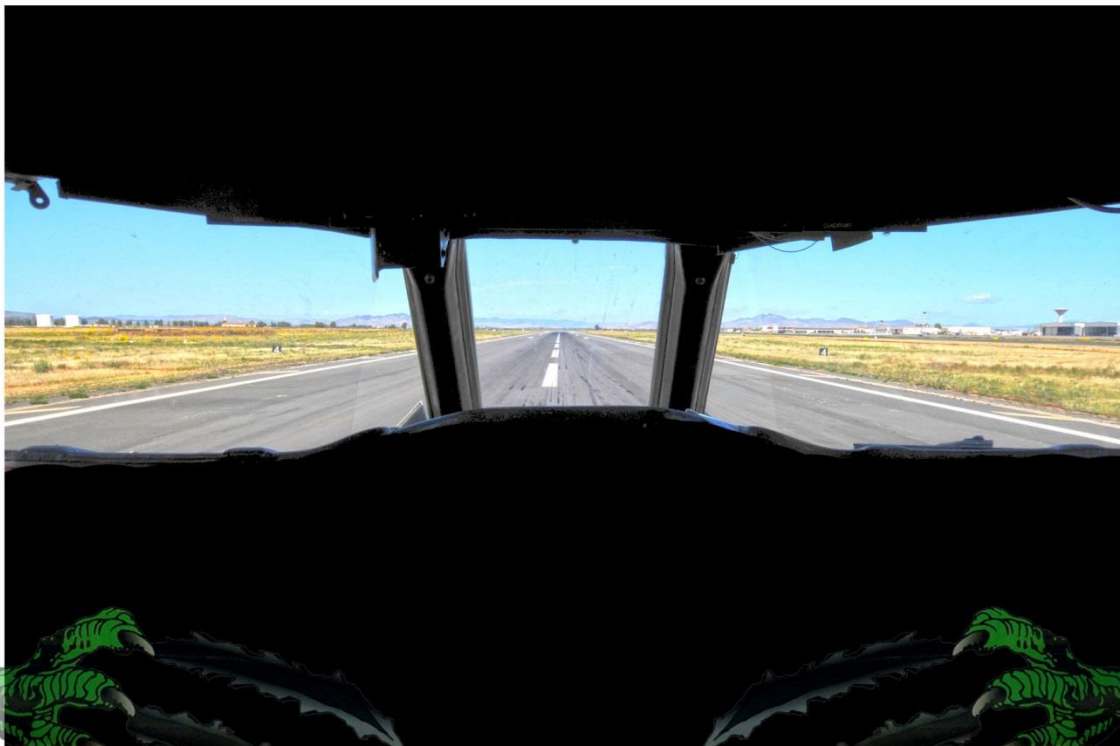
## On-station Vol.3 -- June 2016

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# SKIPPERS CORNER



Over the course of one 24 hour period from the 13th through the 14th of June, the Skinny Dragons of Patrol Squadron FOUR (VP-4) did something amazing; they launched six different aircraft spread across five different locations around the world on six very different missions.

In Comalapa, El Salvador, the 70 person detachment launched their 35th counter-drug mission of the deployment. The men and women of this detachment work closely with several other units of the Joint Interagency Task Force, South (JIATF-S) to stop the distribution and sale of illegal drugs. Money from the sale of these drugs is often used to support international terrorist organizations and the efforts of JIATF-S have a direct and meaningful impact on national defense. To date, VP-4 has contributed to 21 busts totaling 19,808 kilos of illegal drugs with a street value of over \$501,170,000.

VP-4 also has a permanent detachment stationed in Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti. This team of Skinny Dragons operates in the sweltering heat of Africa to fly overland intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions in support of counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa. Their flight on this day represented VP-4's presence on a third continent and demonstrates the P-3C's ability to operate in extreme conditions.

Simultaneously, VP-4 participated in Exercise BALTOPS 2016 from Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany. With one aircraft, two aircrews, and 18 maintenance professionals, the detachment is a small part of the large multinational maritime exercise. BALTOPS 2016 included approximately 6,100 maritime, ground, and air force troops from 17 participating nations. The exercise is designed to allow the participants to hone their maritime interdiction, anti-submarine warfare, amphibious operations, and air defense tactics, techniques, and procedures in a combined and joint environment. On this particular day, Combat Aircrew TEN conducted an anti-submarine warfare flight demonstrating the primary mission area of the P-3C Orion.

Operating out of Naval Air Station Rota, Spain, Combat Aircrew FIVE supported by several maintenance professionals provided airborne support for the USS EISENHOWER as she made her way into the Mediterranean Sea. This kind of support to a Carrier Strike Group is another critical mission of the P-3C. An airborne P-3C gives the Strike Group Commander visibility on threats beyond his horizon and the ability to destroy those threats if the need arises.

In a rare feat, VP-4 provided support to a second Carrier Strike Group on the same day. Flying out of NAS Sigonella, Italy, Combat Aircrew EIGHT flew in support of the USS TRUMAN as she conducted operations in the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Even in the face of all these rigorous operational demands, the Skinny Dragons of VP-4 made time to continue training for tomorrow's fight as well. The vision of VP-4 is to "Do right to fight, today and tomorrow". To do that, the most experienced Sailors of this squadron must pass on the lessons they have learned to the next generation of warriors. On this day, the squadron also executed an important Pilot Training Flight to ensure that the long line of outstanding Skinny Dragon Aviators continues into the future.

Days like this are not unique to this squadron or this moment in history. Days like this represent any given day in the long and venerable history of the mighty P-3C Orion and the entire Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Community.

Skinny Dragons... Breathe Fire!



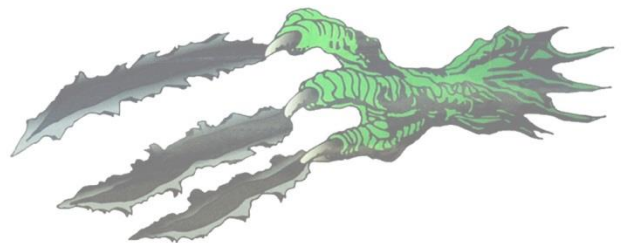
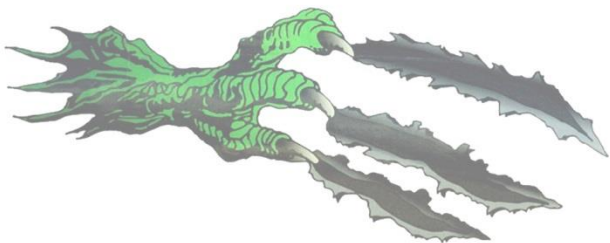
# DJIBOUTI DIRECT

Aloha from Djibouti,

Another month has come and gone, and what a month it has been. Congratulations to all of the individuals who were promoted this month! Well done to each of you. In the first part of June, the Djibouti detachment spent much of their time preparing to swap locations and return to Sigonella for the remainder of deployment. New individuals began arriving at the beginning of the month, and those of us who will be leaving are anxious to enjoy Italy, especially the food. Our “Over the Hump” party, although small, was a great success and consisted of pizza, sandwiches, and a legendary volleyball match between Ops and Maintenance. Much like the previous months, this one brought with it new hardships in the form of extreme weather. In April, we endured a short, yet powerful wet season, followed by the punishing



summer heat that reached temperatures as high as 125 degrees Fahrenheit. Djibouti Dragons have also dealt with huge sand and dust storms. These storms have been a challenge to the maintainers as they work tirelessly to ensure the aircraft is in peak condition. The storms present a challenge to the aircrew as well, who in order to complete the mission must fly through the dry, sandy air. Even with this new set of obstacles, our warfighters have fulfilled every expectation as they work tirelessly to uphold the VP-4 values of Family, Leadership, and Integrity.





# BALTOPS 16

By LTJG Matthew Johnston

Patrol Squadron (VP) FOUR participated in the NATO Exercise BALTOPS 16 from 3-18 June. BALTOPS is an annually occurring exercise that is designed to enhance interoperability and demonstrate the ability of partner and allied nations to defend the Baltic region. The Skinny Dragons of VP-4 deployed two Combat Aircrews, 18 aircraft maintenance professionals, and one P-3C Orion to Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany and established Task Group (CTG) 67.2. Joining the Skinny Dragons as members of CTG 67.2 was a P-8A Poseidon from VP-26, a P-3C from VP-62, and numerous aircraft maintainers from both squadrons. Combat Aircrew SEVEN (VP-4) also flew one mission out of Lielvārde Air Base, Latvia.

CTG 67.2 aircraft flew 18 missions during the exercise, totally over 67 hours of on station training with NATO and partner forces. The Poseidon and Orion crews flew a diverse set of missions but their primary focus was Anti-submarine Warfare (ASW) and Anti-surface Warfare. The aircrews honed their ASW skills working with three submarines and over 40 surface combatants. The well trained NATO submarine crews and challenging environmental conditions in the Baltic Sea created excellent training opportunities for the P-3C and P-8A aircrews.

“BALTOPS provided our entire team a fantastic training opportunity. The dynamic mission scenarios challenged us and we are now better prepared for combined operations with our NATO allies and partners” remarked Combat Aircrew TEN Mission Commander and Detachment Officer-in-Charge, LCDR Brian Blaschke. “Additionally, a key to our success was our hard working and talented aircraft maintainers; they put our aircrews in a mission ready aircraft every time, on time.”

The Skinny Dragons of VP-4 worked tirelessly to support BALTOPS 16 and are extremely grateful for the opportunity to train with such talented NATO forces and build interoperability. VP-4 looks forward to future operations with NATO allies and partners as we exercise our mutual commitment to Baltic Security.

## Quick Facts:

BALTOPS is an annually recurring multinational exercise designed to enhance flexibility and interoperability, as well as demonstrate resolve of allied and partner forces to defend the Baltic region. This is the 44th year of the exercise.

One P-3C Orion aircraft and two aircrews from the “Skinny Dragons” of VP-4 were assigned to participate in ‘BALTOPS 2016. The crews flew Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and Anti-Surface Warfare (ASUW) operations.

One P-3C from VP-62 and one P-8A Poseidon from VP-26 also participated in the exercise.

Combined Task Group (CTG) 67.2 was formed for the exercise and is comprised of 92 Sailors from three squadrons.

CTG 67.2 was commanded by VP-4 Commanding Officer, CDR Christopher Smith.







# SPANGDAHLEM, GERMANY





